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A VISION OF IMMORTALITY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR



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BROAD STREET

A VISION OF IMMORTALITY

BY
STEPHEN REID-HEYMAN

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B. H. BLACKWELL, BROAD STREET

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A VISION OF IMMORTALITY

SLEPT I or woke? For, as our slumber seems
But waking, when we toss and turn again
Mocked by the fitful fantasy of dreams ;
When instants prove eternities of pain,
Or wrap us round in never-ending bliss—
So was' my sleep, and thus my spirit hung
Imminent 'twixt another world and this,
Nor had a part in either : but, as flung,
A derelict beyond the bounds of Time,
To spin above the Ages' dizzy height,
Topped by all-over arching Space, sublime
In its immensity. Nor mortal sight
May vision to that furthest rolling sphere,
Which tranquilly its orbit doth pursue ;
Nor mortal mind conceive its limit. There
The depths are as the heights. Sheer down the blue
Falls from the Zenith ever. As the robes
About the limbs of some Titanic God
Thus hangs it, spangled o'er with lustrous globes,

Turning, for ever turning, on their road—
Dust of the myriad worlds upon His garments
strowed.

Nor as a mortal ear may judge accord
Smote thro' the mighty void such harmony
As ne'er vibrated in an earthly chord—
Where one forlorn creation's melody
Strikes on the listening soul. But there was heard
The universal music some have sung,
Hoping perchance to gather in a word,
Or a fond phrase, the fancy they have wrung
From a world's discord of a perfect whole.
And, as all space embraced me, so the sound
From out the Heavens' confines seemed to roll
In an organic consonance. Around
Played winds and thunders, rivulets and rain,
Melodious echoes which this Earth hath known,—
The song of birds, the ocean's deep refrain,
Cavernous sighs, complaints, murmurs, laughter, grown
To full expression of sonorous song,
Changed from our finite utterance; and blent
With mightier tones, whose Dorian accents throng
Out to Infinity e'er they be spent.
Then to my listening ear a voice, a breath was
sent.

Voice of the Universe

“ How it spins,
The Earth—at the point where the morning begins !
Lift, mortal, thine eyes.
Thou shalt see in the Heavens new splendour
arise :
Freed by a breath from an earthly bond
Mount on the wings of a hope, and aspire
As a thought to the limitless sky beyond.
As a bird’s be thy flight
To the cloudless height,
Thro’ the boundless blue of the infinite ;
Till the shades retire,
And the sun dips down as a ball of fire,
Till thou rest on the bosom of thy desire,
In the arms of delight.”

“ Out-speed thou the day !
And the star which lies
Clasped by a crescent moon at night.
Worlds and dominions in vast array,
Clad in celestial panoplies,
Marshal their hosts in the further skies—
Sons of the universe, legions of might,
Dazzle the range of thy human sight :

Planets, which sail the aerial ocean
Bound by the laws of an ampler motion,
Wait for the beat
Of thy coming feet.

Hasten, oh ! haste
To a beauty—a fairness—
Making thy earth but a waste,
But a bareness.

Listen and linger a space, and then
Speed thee again to the homes of men."

So poised I hung attentive. I was caught
All unaware in tangled skeins of wind,
Caught, covered, wrapt about. Fled time, and
thought

Lost its old order, and the conscious mind
Its reasoned landmarks. Carried by what breath
From out what gusty cavern know I not,
Nor what Supernal Being, Life or Death,
By magic moving hath my soul forgot ;—
But through the azure air my course I cleft,
The waves of æther lapping me. Below
In murky gloom the little Earth was left
Meshed in her netted vapours. To and fro,
Pendulant as a thurible, the moon
Chained to her side its furthest limit swung.

There Mars' red lustre faded in the noon
Of suns more luminous. Great Saturn hung
Ringed by his lambent circles, to descry
The satellites around him. Night and Day
Ran their uncertain measures. Worlds rolled by,
Stars, comets, meteors, lightnings at their play—
Swift as a morning dream they came, they passed
away.

“ Oh ! wondrous void, illimitable !—all
Ye constellations in appointed place ! ”
I cried, and heard the little accents fall
As a clear silver resonance through space.
Earthbound, some watcher of the Heavens' height
Caught the thin tones, and startled, gazed afar,
Scanning the pastures of mysterious night—
Then turned to weave his theory of a star.
“ Oh, Power illustrious, ever-brooding Soul,
Instinct of all creation, where art Thou ?
Where is the One Who doth the worlds control ?
Where is Thine own peculiar presence ? How,
Tho' I should view Thy handiwork, to find
Thee, its Creator, Thee the primal Cause,
Thee the all-present, all-inspiring Mind ?
Thee I solicit. Tho' the heart refuse

A Deity it hunger for, I feel
Thy breath about my being, and I see
Print of Thy feet. I hear Thee move. Reveal
One glory of Thy person unto me.
Stoop, and by stooping, thus complete Thy
majesty."

•

And might the strong entreaty gain reward?
Listening I paused. The pregnant moment fled
Unfruitful for me. Heaven's disregard
Mocked in a calm indifferent sky o'erhead.
And seemed it that the Universe was set
In panoramic pomp before mine eyes
To point mine own mortality, and fret
To barren questionings. Infinities
Flouted my finite self. If God there were,
Heedless of every human heart He stayed
Unalterably mute. He doth not hear
Man's praise, petitions. Tho' the worlds arrayed
In majesty pass and repass to please
The dictates of His fancy: tho' the sun
Rises and sets: yea, tho' His hand release
Their breath to all things living, man hath run
The race of life remote. The ages gaze
Upon his generations. One by one
Each mortal son of Time lives out his days,

Plieth his task, unaided and alone,
And passeth as a breath, his little cycle done.

My feet have stood beside the tomb of kings.
A dynasty's last resting-place hath taught
The evanescence of all earthly things,
Measured the span to which a race is brought.
Where the broad Yangtze rolls its yellow flood
To meet in widening line the ocean waves,
Eternally o'er Nankin's city brood
The monuments of those forgotten graves.
Of all the splendour which the past hath known
Remaineth but a barren sepulchre,
A few portentous figures carved in stone.
Vanished the Ming, the Manchu Empire. There
Buildeth the bird, and hums the wandering bee.
My footsteps tarry in the wilderness,
And I have felt mine own humanity
Mingle in passing with the Earth I press.
Beneath, once quickened dust hath sunk to
sleep:
And I stand here, a kindred Earth as they,
To see the hills their endless vigil keep,
And mark th' unclosing eyes of night and day,
And pluck the flowers which bloom from that poor
mortal clay.

Oh ! jealous craft of man ! to seek to raise
Memorials Time can not obliterate.
The centuries in gathered concourse gaze
On the poor trophies. Thus they stand and wait
For stern necessity's last stroke to fall—
These monumental griefs in stone arrayed,
Love frozen in a marbled Taj Mahal ;
Or, where the columns shattered and decayed
Of some proud temple, strew th' unhallowed sand
Of Africa. There ruin hath its place :
There shall I see again th' unkindly hand
Which strives man's work, as man himself, to efface ;
The rancorous hate which would remove from sight
Even these small resultants of his toil—
Tho' his heart nerveless lie. No more the light
Of day beguiles shut eyes. Time hath his spoil
In hecatombs of victims. Must he take
All of our human hope, and make it his ?
Nor leave to us for memory's dear sake
Even these relics of the past, or this
Poor splendid effort to avert forgetfulness ?

The red hibiscus flaunts its gaudy flower
Above the Buddhist temple's calm. They come,
The patient worshippers ; and hour by hour
Scatter the orange buds before the tomb

Of a lost deity. The Hindoo rears
An ornate shrine to gods he may not know.
Still down the tide of swiftly passing years,
And on the wave of worship to and fro
Floateth the flotsam of all mortal prayers ;
The sound of voices calling from afar
Upon a god who neither sees nor hears
The dull monotonous refrain " Allah ! "
These are the winds which whistle down the road
Of barren ages man hath sought to tread
In his vain confidence of nearing God.
These are the tears of the forgotten dead,
Who beat, as we, upon the gates of brass,
Sending their clanging up to smite the skies ;
And fretted at the bounds they might not pass,
And at the hidden march of destinies.
What are they now to us but less than memories ?

I too shall see my little day wear out.
The gamut of sensation hath been played.
I have not wantoned with th' insidious doubt
Which gnaws the heart of life. But unafraid
My hands have toyed with Death : and I have seen
Upon the loveless and unlovely bier
The poor remains of all that man hath been,
Yet have I put aside the coward fear

That I shall be as they. No more, no less
Than they have been I am. Should Fortune smile
And turn her wheel to send me happiness,
It were not mine by right. A little while
Shall bring my dust to theirs. Life hath been kind,
And I have loved the Earth. Her changing face
Hath been mine own expression ; and my mind
Hath sought in Nature's mysteries to trace
The reason of our being. To repine
And hunger for lost happiness were vain.
But man will ever lingeringly resign
What most he loves. The hope doth yet remain
Of some far place and time when all shall live again.

Oh ! distant Earth, Oh ! beauty desolate !
Wracked world, the sport of Heaven ! Destiny
Ordains thy woe Promethean—thus to wait,
And know eternal sorrow. It shall be
Not unremembered : but the night and day
Shall drop their clouds in weeping, and the throng
Of pitying stars lament thee, and the stray
Sad winds repeat thy anguish, till the song
Of birds renew the burden. I have left
Thy soil incarnined with thy children's life.
The deep of tears unloosed in souls bereft
Poureth its fountains : and th' inglorious strife

Shaketh the hill-tops, as it strips the green
From the young shoots, which bud to greet the
Spring.

But never more shall Spring by you be seen,
Who hailed last April's pledge; or heard the
ring

Of the far cuckoo's cry. The woodlands stand,
Clothed, as your eyes beheld them, in the hue
Of their young leaves. A million flowers expand,
And morning stars them with its globes of dew.
They breathe, they bloom as then—but you, oh!
where are you?

April! thou nymph of the awakening wood,
There is no springtime in this heart. It is
A chill unpeopled wintry solitude.
Yet I remember, as a child, thy kiss
Could rouse from sleep my spirit, till it grew,
Warmed by a sudden happiness, akin
To thy young buds and blossoms. For I knew
No autumn wind of bitterness or sin
To check the splendour of a thought, whose
clear

Light shone in loneliness—that ecstasy
Of a new fancy, when no voice was near
To break the bubble by a breath. And I

Walked as tho' Heavenwerewith me, and each flower,
Or bird, or cloud, or pebble was alive
With a mysterious promise, and each hour
Was as a golden age. Oh ! I would give
My yet remaining days, that I might know
The rapture of the Spring again, and be
As I have been, and as I am not now—
To dream again one glorious dream, and see
In my dead self that soul of immortality.

Oh ! that we knew that we might come again
As disembodied spirits to the spot
Which holds our love. For then were earthly pain
Too lightly held, and misery forgot
With every pang that rends us. Bliss assured
Would build a palace from these prison bars ;
Whence we might mock mortality, secured
From its worst bitterness. Each bud that stars
The dewy sod were born to nobler birth :
More intimate the fields, the paths we tread :
Nor were it fancy, that the tuneful mirth
Of every wind doth voice our glorious dead ;
And in each instant's space a kindly death
Remoulds some shattered life. Sun, earth, and air
Were instinct for us with a rarer breath.
Not to some far removed place, but here—

Earth-loved, earth-owned they come! Ah! thus
the heart

Fashions its dream. Still, as the blind, we grope,
And seek an answering grasp. We live apart,
And Earth confines the spirit's ampler scope—
There is nor voice, nor hand, nor certainty—nor hope.

What if these fears were but a passing dream,
Spun in the twilight—if we shall awake
To other lives and hopes, which may redeem
The weight of parting here: and, climbing, take
Anew th' adventure. Nor shall slumbrous mead
Rest drowsy heads, nor Lethe's spring unseal
Its dull narcotic for the tired dead.

But, freed from mortal weariness, to feel
Death as a swift restorer, and to know
Our youthful vigour once again were good.
Tho' on the earth this human frame outgrow
Its primal lustiness; although the flood
Of life be checked by age, and heads be grey,
Cheeks withered, and the memory flag and fail—
Desire for youth again hath no decay:
Nor can a fretting palsy shake the frail
Yet constant longing for another Spring.
The turn of winter wakes the heart. Man sees
Nature's rebirth, and his imagining

Lingers behind the march of years, disease.
Youth, love 'as shades return—and he is one with
these.

Phantoms alike !—we live amidst regret,
Longings, remorse, the ghosts we loved, those dear,
Those all too happy moments when we met,
Pledged, wept, and parted, friends or lovers.—

Here,

Here is the unplumbed depth of pain. Shall Love,
The bright companion of this life, depart
For ever ? or imperishable prove,
And guide by constancy th' inconstant heart
To its eternal haven ? It should be,
As in the past, the fount of life, and speak
With more than hope of immortality.
Yet Love can fail the lover in the weak
Betrayal of the senses. It can die
With nature's death. It hath a thousand forms
Chameleon-like, deluding to the eye.
And tho' it should outlive the changes, storms,
And passions of our youth : though one at least
Of those we loved be with us to the end—
Where is it fled when dying hath released
The passing breath of life ? Time doth not send
Back to our empty arms the vanished lover,—friend,

And you, frail exquisite delights, whose birth
Enriches us, whose passing robs, each thought
Springing to glorify this common earth ;
You, childhood's happy fancies, hopes which taught
Our souls to long for better things ; the tear
Shed for another's grief ; and sacrifice
In which a selfish lust doth disappear,
And man, for man's own sake, will agonise
To gain a common good—yet, being man,
So perishes—What is your end ? To be
A little nobler than when life began,
A little more resigned to destiny,
More patient of offence, more prone to reach
Out to eternal truth, which shall survive
The fickle passions of the heart, and teach
How best to live and die, how best forgive
What seems unkindness here—if we may gain
Such flowers of the soul, and these should stay,
Outliving in our death Earth's wrong and pain—
One such ethereal blossom of to-day
By its immortal bloom can expiate decay.

So questioned I, as one who sorroweth
For a lost love, young love which is no more,
But perishes, benumbed by icy Death.
Too great for mortal strength the load I bore

Of bitterness. My spirit failed, and shrank
In bondage of the flesh. A pilgrim bowed
Beneath the weight of his desire, I drank
As some poor wretch whose thirst is not allowed
Pure water, but who, dying, stoops to drink
From poisoned sources in a desert land.
So quenched I longing in despair. To think
Were very anguish : till, methought, a hand
Placed on this brow compelled it to restrain
The tumult of vain questions. Sound there seemed
As of deep sighing drowsiness. Again
A truant sleep came back : again I dreamed
In dreams' disorder ; winds upon the sea,
Vast echoes in wide rooms, commingled, beat
In solemn chords ; till voices awakened me,
Plucking Life back to consciousness, and sweet
As the first broken tones when parted lovers meet.

First Voice

“ Far removéd from his home,
On a single ray of light,
Thro' the violet depths of night
He hath come.”

Second Voice

“ Doth he speak ? ”

First Voice

“ Cold his cheek.
On his eyes the lids are lying
As a fringed curtain. Damp his hair :
From his parted lips a breath, a sighing.”

Second Voice

“ Doth he stir ? ”

First Voice

“ Waking were not overlong—
Rouse him, sister, by your song.”

Third Voice (singing)

“ I hover
Over the heart of a rose,
And over
Every bud of the field that blows,
Every blossom that peeps and springs,
All the beautiful woodland things.
There, where the dappled orchis grows,
Hide I a moment, close, so close,
None but the honey-bee may discover.

Snatch I a kiss from the thyme, my lover :
And, as the tasselled catkin swings,
Dry I at dawn my dew-drenched wings.
Breath am I of the scented clover ;
Heart of the bird that mounts and sings ;
Soul of all swift and lovely things.
Seek for me, follow me. Where I go
Only the wisest shall ever know."

Second Voice (singing)

" I have seen
Old Triton rising from his bed of green.
Hark ! the refrain !
Far out upon the main
Bloweth he well,
Bloweth he gaily on his hornéd shell.
In rosy seaweed raiment closely clinging,
Lo ! where they follow,
The daughters of Nereus, sweetly singing
In the curved breakers' hollow ;
Pale as the dawn's own misty pallor, bringing
Pearls from the ocean caves,
Arms and fair breasts as pearls together gleaming—
Whilst o'er the waves
Halcyone's shrill cry to Thetis dreaming."

First Voice (singing)

“Sight is vain, and form pretence
In the narrow world of sense.
Lost to faith and blind to hope,
Captive on the earth, ye grope,
Bounded by your vision’s scope.
Tho’ the arching dome of heaven
By a myriad souls be riven ;
Tho’ the texture thought may wear,
And the damask vesture given
To each imaged essence there,
Be to thee mere substance spanned
By the eye, or by the hand :
Tho’ each errant breath which blows
Some intrinsic spirit knows ;
And a wingéd beauty play
In the garb of common clay—
Yet what flesh hath taught to thee
But obscures reality,—
Snatched away behind the veil
Flesh retires, and senses fail :
And the agencies which lie
Hidden from a mortal eye
Hasten hither—wake and see
All the spirit’s subtlety.”

For here eternal beauty lived. Oh ! such
As in the love-creating brain doth haunt
The rapturous moment of delight we snatch
From all-devouring Time. Scarce had the chaunt
Of the clear accents called me,—e'er it died
Into the silence of a multitude,
Unchallenged—save when one, not distant, cried
To some far spirit, which but now had stood
Poised by his rainbow pinions in the mist
On some high peak aspiring to the sky,
Whose snow-enshrouded summit soared, and
kissed

Heaven's embracing arc. Thence would he fly
To his adopted place ; (down mirrored sea
No bird so swift in passage). Heart and sight
Too impotent for such perceptions be,
Trammelled by flesh. The senses would unite
To turn aside thought's radiancy, that breath
Of the eternal Universe. But I
Had sprung to knowledge, and outdistanced death :
And, as pure thought is fetterless, so free
Blended my soul with love, wisdom, infinity.

And midst a concourse of bright shapes, which
thought
Clad, tho' intangible, in forms mine eyes

On earth had witnessed : and remembrance wrought
By cunning wizardry into the guise
Of recollected loveliness, I stood.

And one there was enthroned, whose visage wore
A mien familiar. For, as rainclouds brood
Upon the slopes of those same heights, which
soar

Sharp pinnaced to pierce the gloom, and roll
Their sunlit peaks in crystal glancing snow—
So slumbered every passion of the soul
And hidden mystery upon her brow ;
Knowledge, foreknowledge, and the long-delayed
Labour of ages, and the travailing hour
Whose fruit is yet withheld, whose pain, unpaid,
In calm expectancy awaits the dower
Of garnered joy. Beneath her garment grey
Scarcely the band that curve of breast restrained,
Which, as a billow, rose to fall away,
Or as a harvest moon hath waxed and waned
Above the stubble fields where dusk and silence
reigned.

Oh ! flowery wilderness, oh ! fragrant shade
Incensed with myrtle, light-enamelled roof
Of quiet sky ! about whose azure strayed
Faint clouds, as pensive spirits hold aloof

From their own fellows, wandering where they
list,

Pure airs, distilled from dewy sod to meet
A frolic zephyr, and condense in mist,
Panting, o'er weighted with their burden sweet.
And even as such morning shades, half formed,
Melt from the sight in Heaven's eternal blue,
So round about her countless beings swarmed,
Not wholly visioned, which their forms renew,
Disperse, refashion. As a ranged host
Attentive to the summons waits a word,
Thus hung they instant. Wings and tresses tost
In mid-air flashed. The aspen branches stirred
By each light breeze revealed them—they were
gone—

Mocking the eager heart which would detain
A beauty it has loved and gazed upon,
Yet sees untenanted the shell remain—
Till sudden wonder grows—the dream has come
again !

Here were fair flowers in gay profusion spread.
A changing carpet of a thousand hues
Rolled to her feet. And the young Dawn had
shed
In goblet or on blade its crystal dew

To catch and cleave to coloured fires the light
Which had been woven cunningly, and cast
About the mantling skies, when drowsy night
Turned tip-toe westward. Every wind which
passed

Was heavy with its load of mingled scent,
Sweet as Arabia's perfumes, or beyond
Where cassia groves of India breathe, or lent
By mountain buds at haunted Trebizond,
Which pour their odorous breath upon the breeze
To mingle with the salt sea air. Each flower
Hung resonant with hum of murmuring bees,
Culling the nectar of a golden hour.
And, as far bells across the meadows break
To silver cadences a silence grey,
I heard her voice th' attentive echoes wake,
Deep as the sound of waters at their play,
Or harmonies of worlds which sing upon their way.

Spirit of Nature speaks

" There is an unquiet spirit here. The dreams
Which haunt the paths of all good men return
Hindered in passing. And the radiant thoughts
Which vitalise those regions called the Earth,
Inhabiting each lovely form, and seek

To captivate man's heart, and charm the eye,
Stay with us ever. To this happy place
Where, thro' eternity, my toil hath been
Blest, undisturbed and fruitful, none approach
Save hopes fulfilled which home as nesting birds,
Those fond desires which win their end, and love
Accomplished in the love returned. Oh ! ye,
Spirits which come obedient to my call,
Bright genii ! sprung from that pure fount of joy
Controlling all, and visions which are spun
Under the eyelids of a quiet sleep,
To hang as golden webs across the shade
Of an obscuring gloom : ye fancies gay !
Adorning worlds which only move to be
The instruments of their Creator's will—
You ! happy throng of immaterial joys !
Powers, agencies, and essences, the life
Of Nature and her soul, the secret spring
Of each pale bud's unfolding, and the breath
Of motion, growth, fecundity, desire :
Intents, which as white lightnings play across
The ardent brain, and burn to fuse in one
Man and his destiny : ye splendid aims !
Purposes, passions, and enduring hopes
Bestowing immortality on all,
Which else were empty shadows of a dream—

Approach, reveal what chilling vapour blows
With'ring the still unopened lily cup,
And pales the crimson of the flushing rose,
Plucking the heart of all desire, and wreathes
As a green exhalation at the feet
Of skiey lianes in the forest shade.
Mortality's own taint is spread abroad.
Upon my brow I feel it, and I know
Some impious thing which moves, rebels, aspires,
Judge of its self-conceived end, to mouth
Th' unanswering sky despairingly, and sow
The purple thistles of disquietude."

Voices of Spirits

" Desire doth load the heart. The nimble will
Pants to fulfil thy bidding. But our tongue,
Even as our swift feet, which can o'erleap
The bound of Time, refrains. For here is care,
Whence sprung we know not : and dull melancholy
Shackling the eager sense. The frail sweet breath
Of undeclining hope is still."

Spirit of Nature

" And ye ? "

Voices of Spirits

" Broken for us the silver rounds of speech.
None clothe the mounting thought ; Great Mother,
 none
Of all thy children answer."

Spirit of Nature

" None ? "

Voices of Spirits

" Save one."

Spirit of Nature

" Thou, who with wind-blown pinions, breath
 forespent,
Comest, as one who hasteth, but whose speed
Lags ever hindermost to urgency,—
Speak and reveal thy secret."

Spirit

" In the warmth
Of purple clouds, which lingered down the track
Of a descended star, I stayed my flight,
Hovering beneath the silver-hornéd moon
O'er-hanging Earth."

Spirit of Nature

“ Desolate Earth ! the world,
Which He Who rules us holds apart in chains,
Captive for ages, most apart, forlorn ! ”

Spirit

“ The same wan star ! And from its distant shores
Went up unceasingly that host of shapes
Unholy, plumed as the night birds, which hung
To do the monstrous will of sometime Gods.
Their ebon wings obscured the smile of day—
Their talons tore the evening. Thus I bent
To turn the hearkening ear, as, with one arm
Encircling the crescent's tip, I heard
The low tumultuous surging of the deep
Of human passions. For uprose the sounds
Alike of revelry and empty mirth,
And senseless folly, and th' obscene discord
Which is the soul of cities. Mingled there
The cries of pain from beds where sick men sweat,
And wearied eyes are sleepless : and the hum
And idle pattering of fools, who lust
After their yellow gold, and sell their souls
To count the coins of an empty gain.

There jangled bells which called to prayer, where
priests

Muttered their meaningless orisons, vain
Unending repetitions of dull lips
Vexing the unknown God. I heard the feet
Of sallow Fear speeding down noisome lanes :
Laughter of women clasping disease and vice ;
The debauchee who snatched his licensed prey,
And wallowed in the sensual filth : the tones
Of the most unjust just whose proud decree
Crushes repentance Love had stooped to fan.
And from the red-soiled plain where men, as beasts,
Tore at the naked flesh of brothers, came
The shock of iron wheels, and hideous cries,
Most horrible, and sudden hollow thrills
Reverberating as the thunder. Clouds
Sulphurous, split by violet flames, revealed
The steaming soil of lands whose fruit is death.
Gaunt Famine stalked abroad, and rank disease
Strode thro' deserted villages, and claimed
The remnant hidden. And the faint sick air
Breathed up the stench of putrid dead, which
dung

The summer fields. And ever there was cast
About the vales impenetrable mists
Of heavy tears, which fall and fall again

Quenchless adown the pallid cheek of Woe.
Ah me !—these saw I, heard I ! ”

Spirit of Nature

“ Ever the same
Nor new—nor old. Sawest thou naught beside ? ”

Spirit

“ Those monstrous birds of Hell, which the foul
thoughts

Of man engender, and which tear the life
Forth from his bowels, as Jove's eagle pluckt
The Titan's side eternally—these hung
Above the rolling world. New formed each hour
From Shame and Falsehood's loins, they rise and
brood

Above the souls which fashion them, and grow
With each fresh lust and hatred. Yet between
Their horrid ranks arose aerial shapes
Visioned as delicate forms, whose wings might scarce
Stem the fierce tide. These, as faint breaths, were
borne

Swiftly aloft. And from them fell away
Each particle of dust, each stain, each tear

Witnessing to Earth's frailty. They became
Diffused as with clear light, the rosy veins
Pulsing with heavenly ichor, which endues
The frame it permeates with life. Each brow
The stedfast seal of strong endurance wore :
And thus, borne by a wingéd hour, they rose
Into the golden distance, and so passed "—

Spirit of Nature

" Such thou hast seen before ! "

Spirit

" These were indeed

Th' attenuated essences of good,
The exquisite remainder of men's lives
Grown old in self-surrender. These the wine
Crushed from the crimson fruit of life, which Hate,
Malice, Corruption, Flattery, and Greed
Touch never. With immortal flowers they fled
Bathed in an azure glow. Yet I beheld "—

Spirit of Nature

" Thou pausest. Turn thine eyes on mine. I see
In their unfathomable depths a shade,
A sadness."

Spirit

“ Sorrow’s reflection. As a ghost,
One midst the many passed. The eddying waves
Of the sweet winds were rift. Not with the fire
Of inexpressible delight, which bathes
Those radiant souls who seek a destined place
Upon the breast of that still source of joy
Springing to all infinity—he passed,—
But clad in sombre shades of night, and dark
As the grey shadows of a rock-girt pool.
Then cried I to the airs, and to the winds,
And to each shifting star ; and to the bleak
Ice-neededled lustre of the barren moon ;
And those sharp rays aslant, which pierce as spears
The fog-girt environs of Earth, and smite
The eastern skies ablaze. These questioned I,
Who came ? Who passed ? pallid, with sickly
 flowers
Of charnel houses on his breast, his brow ;
And the unquenchable desire of earth
Writ on the wistful lips. Call thou again.
Conjure to thee each vagrant sprite which goes
On his unresting journey into space :
Summon the winds, the sunlight, and the stars
Traversing heaven with no bourne but such

As cometh in a thousand ages. Call
On the swift fire, which rends the height, and on
The vast reverberations of the shock
Of mingling clouds. These are thy messengers.
These may reveal the meaning of this thing,
And whence this spirit comes, and whither goes."

Then she upon the throne rose up, and cried
To the fair sky above ; and to the clouds,
And mists, which o'er the fields of heaven ride
Charioned on the breeze ; and to the crowds
Of laughing stars rejoicing on their way ;
And to each errant beam which builds the arch
Of the round rainbow, or upholds the Day ;
To Night, and to the marshalled shades which march
Before the tempest ; to the fires that burn
Down the swift meteor's path : or as the bright
And livid lightnings, whose quick feet return
From their wide wanderings in the depth and
height.

These she solicited ; and as she spake
The sudden steps of hurrying storms passed by :
And the vast tones of thunder rose to break
The burdened hush : the boundless range of sky
Flashed into spectral rays, as when the deep
Blue lustre of a northern night is rent

By the aurora :—and stars waked from sleep
To shout their answer : and the sunbeams bent
In arcs attentive, and the lightnings listening went.

Voices of Light

“ Thro’ pillared halls of clear translucency,
And the pavilioned dawn where all joys be,
We wander ever,
Climbing the storied ascents of the day ;
And sporting play
About the glowing hours, to pass and hover
On silver wings. Lo ! in the dazzled eye
Of some rewarded lover
We flit as sunshine o’er the sky,
Cleft by a mote to purple brilliancy :
And weave a web of wonder as we glisten.
Speak thou again to us. Thy children listen.”

Voices of Darkness

“ We are the shades, which spread
About the grave of the departed day, the dead
Remains of vanished Time ; the gloom
Of yawning gulfs where shadows meet,
And circle ever round the head
Of the lost year ;
Or at the tomb

Of a past hour, which dawned to disappear,
Too short, too sweet !
Forth from the home
Of Night we come,
And bend obedient at thy feet."

Voice of the Moon

" Attentive to thy call
I answer thee
Out of my crystal ball,
O'er frosted as a miracle
Of snow and ice, and riméd imagery,
To float, a bubble, on the liquid sea
Of all infinity."

Voices of Fire

" Heart of Fire,
Pointed twisted tongues which burn am I—
Golden flames that rise, aspire ;
Lambent shafts to pierce and fly
Straight and swift as keen desire
Down the blue of icy heaven :
Bolts whereby the vault is riven,
Blazing through a stricken cloud
By the hasty whirlwinds driven :
Burning sheets to mask and shroud

All the shapeless worlds, which lie
Naked in their infancy.
Fetterless as they, and free
Till thy summons came to me ;
When, as shadows chased by day,
Or as mists in early morning
Rise, and melt, and pass away,
To my freedom came the warning.
Bound to follow and obey
By the sharp and swift decree
Thus I turn my course to thee."

Voices of Stars

" Our cohorts throng, as the sweet dusk dies
On the breast of the faint and paling skies.
At thy word we wake, at thy call arise."

Voices of Winds

" From the billowed deep,
And the caverns where twined tempests sleep,
From the blue abyss, or the azure dome,
Where the storms and the whirlwinds make their
home,
And the bands of the eddying cyclones roam,

From the depth and height
Of the infinite,
From the far and near,
Thou hast called us back ;—and we pause to hear.”

Voices

“ We are those sounds
Which, from the unimagined bounds
Of all creation, throng to meet the ear.”

Voice

“ The clear
Delicious tinkling of a flower’s bell
In mossy dell.”

Voice

“ The song of bird ”—

Voice

“ The music, that is heard
In the waves’ rythmed beat
About the feet
Of craggy cliffs ”—

Voice

“ The runlet’s melody,
Which down the face of some grey boulder, hung
Above a gold-brown pool, falls airily
Into the sunflecked basin.”—

Voice

“ And the tongue
Native to all sweet sounding things that give
Melodious answer to the winds, and live
To utter harmonies.”

Voice

“ The hollow tone
Of thunder ”—

Voice

“ And the glad cicada’s voice
Raising its joyous pæan ”—

Voice

“ Th’ half-breathed sigh
Of Youth, when passing visions, which rejoice
The awakened sense of loveliness, have gone—
Yet linger in the memory ”—

Voices

“ And all
Echoes of self-abandonment,—the call
Of Hope, Achievement, Virtue, Liberty ;
Prophetic promises of endless bliss
Vouchsafed by souls who suffer, and who die
In this assurance ; and, ascending, fly
Upon their prayer of faith to happiness,
And their hearts’ home. Oh ! all such sounds are
we
Which may outlive the passions and the breath
Of hatred, pride, and dwarfing bitterness,
Envy, corruption, bribery, and death
Of more than body—which, in unity
With Wisdom’s self, persist, and may express
All that is beautiful and pure and free.”

Spirit of Nature

“ Ye have no end, no wish apart from this—
But to obey the dictates of the One
Whose Voice breathes through you, and Who permeates
Your inmost natures. In this place, intent
Upon His manifold behests, I weave

The web of structures which shall body forth
The One Supremest Good. Busied perchance
Upon some little flower, the delicate
Intricacy of woof, the frail design
Fretted upon the primrose leaf,—that tint
Which shall incarnadine the rose, I lose
A purpose in the moulding. None can live
Apart from Him. He shares His constant state
With all responsive ; and our forms are but
The shade of His eternal truth. Yet one
Unhappy world exists away from Him ;
And, isolated, suffers all the woes
Of mortal life, pain, wretchedness, and death,
And the corruption bred from foul desire.
Oh ! ye wide sweeping powers, ye imaged forms
Of wisdom, to your wand'ring ken is brought
His full designs. It hath not been till now
That man's unquiet spirit moves abroad.
Those souls alone may pass who have respelt
In their experience each splendid truth,
And live immortal. These alone persist,
And o'er the long line of unending worlds
Seek out a destined work. If one should come,—
Exist among us as a partial good—
Touched with the stains of earth, nor purified
From each defilement—it may be His Will.

We question not. We wonder and extol,
And wait the end. Reveal what ye have seen."

Voices

" There's a spot by all unknown
In the deep woods, overgrown
With the rank and reddening sorrel,
Bryony and yellow fennel ;
Where a ruin stands alone
Desolate 'midst desolation,
By all happy things forsaken.
Only owls, when stars awaken,
Voice a mournful tribulation :
And from out the ivy's tangle
Flutter bats. The scarlet bramble
Fences it about in token,
That decay shall be unbroken."

Voice of Night

" Steal, shade and silence ! your feet
Tarry to hush, and compose
Petal and leaf,
And the brief
Midsummer rose.
Eyelids close.

Birds slumber. Now
Droppeth the dew on the sheaf,
Dew on the blossom and bough.
These in the leafy retreat,
Where shadows lie darkest and deep,
Who are these, playing truant to sleep?
Who joins them, as night enters in? "

Voices

" It is Sin."

Voice of Light

" In the first pale blush of morning,
When the silver day is dawning,
Thro' the tender mists which veil its birth,
By the windless ways of heaven
With fair stars as flowers enwoven
Came I to a world in darkness "—

Voices

" Earth "—

Voice of Light

" And in hidden woodland places
Flowers raised their happy faces.

A VISION OF IMMORTALITY

One came forth, and veiled his eyes
From the pure and laughing skies.
And another on his track
Closely followed. Lo ! his name"—

Voices

" It was Shame,
Shame who never turneth back."

Voices

" And the lover who bent to the kiss
Of the lips, and who fed his desire
In the arms of the loved, sees the fire
From the eyes fade away, and the breath
Cease from warmth, the pulse fail. What is this ? "

Voices

" It is Death."

Voice of Fire

" Tho' the heaven be bride of the Spring,
And echoes the nightingale's voice,
And the swallow be swift on the wing,
And the violet rise from the sod,
And the bramble be ripe by the road,
And the men and the maidens rejoice—

Yet fruitless desire
Shall burn as my fire ;
And the heart and the brain
Be scorched in the furnace of pain."

Voices

" And he who from the old remembered days
Garners no more than dust, and shame, and sin,
And heritage of pain, which never stays
Its unremitting pangs, hath welcomed in
A new bed-fellow "—

Voices

" Profitless Despair ! "

Voices

" Oh, soft and fair
As ripples on a breeze-swept river,
Or as the fall of thine own crystal tear,
Tender-eyed Hope, look up, console us ever.
Shall man, the alien to a happy heaven,
Climb its steep stairs, and kneel, and be forgiven ? "

Voice of Hope

“ My heart is glad altho’ the thin mists veil
From my faint eyes such destinies divine.
And every spring of happiness is mine
Which knows no parching, and can never fail
Though the bleak-tempered Time should shake
his head

Hoary above its source. For I behold,
Over the sea of misery unrolled,
Twin stars of Faith and Love, and Beauty shed
To quicken all around, the unborn as the dead.

“ I hear amidst green boughs the young birds
sing,

As though sweet Spring were moving in the
wood ;

And little flutterings, scarce understood,
Of trembling blossoms which unfold, and bring
Fresh colours to the sward : and from the earth
A delicate uprising of new life
Flushing the wakening groves and fields, and
rife

About the last unlovely haunts of death
Upon the mountain side, or in the vale beneath.

“ Oh ! on unmeasured heights, which seemed to
rise

For ever rocky wastes, the green grass grows.
And from each stagnant chasm slip the snows
Caught through long years. The laughter of
the skies

Sparkles again about each craggy side,
Till stony veins run fire : and at my feet
I hear the sudden pulse of music beat,
Where frost-bound rivulets by winter tied
Break into liquid song, and wander far and wide.

“ The menace of unkindly days is over.
The uncouth shades depart. And empirod Love
Shelters the fragile thoughts of good, which move
Within, around things visible—sky, river,
Fountain and forest, cultured plain and hill,
The embryonic life in hidden seed
Of flower and fruit, and animals that breed
In innocent luxuriance to fill
Each unacquainted spot with happy carnival.

“ And man, erstwhile unlovely in his thought,
Who made the world a desert, sees uprising
The form of immortality, and, gazing
On the fair features of a hope he sought,

Becomes as her he looks on ; till his vision
Passes beyond the present joy, and fashions
In his own pregnant mind new bliss. And
nations

Which stood apart in passionate division,
Now reunited meet where Love and Joy have risen ;

“ For those who hated know no longer Hate,
Nor Pride enslaves the proud. No more Dis-
dain

And Jealousy oppress, nor Fear and Pain
Wrung for another's vengeance desolate
The regions of man's heart. But in his breast
Blossom again sweet buds of Pity, Truth
Such as awakened in the world's first youth,
When Earth, and Man, untortured were at rest
Beneath the rule of Peace, most bountiful, most
blest.

“ And what men termed Decay—the hidden dread
Cankering their lives, the misty film which
dims

The keenest sight, the palsy of the limbs,
The vacant mind whence Reason's light has
fled—

Seems but the casting from a wearied frame
Of the encumb'ring garments which impede
The soul in flight: when, from its trappings
freed,

The naked spirit, lovely as it came,
Mounts ever and aspires, another—yet the same.

“ Oh! all around me is that soul of Love
Which woke the primal ages to create
Fresh fields to roam in, and doth animate
The dust to rise in radiant forms which move,
Pass and repass before my dazzled sight
In conscious joy. As gems from hidden mines
Shed their pure lustre, or, when eve declines
New splendour setting western skies alight
Pillows the passing day upon its bosom bright,

“ So thro' the shades encompassing which dim,
Seeking by disenchantment to deprive
The mind of happiness, to chain and drive
Men to despair, I see a bright Earth swim
Into a sea of light. And sweet and clear
Arise to meet me those soft murmurings
Telling of joy and peace, and the deep springs
Of pure contentment. For the hour is near
When all shall be as one, and darkness disappear.

“ Man one with Love and one with fellow man,
Man from self-bondage freed to dominate
Passions and destinies, to re-create
Beauty more perfect than when first began
His trembling feet the path of life to tread
In innocence. Forth from the grave of sin,
As from a wintry mould the flowers begin
To wake, he rises from a world of dead
Dark things. Oh! heart rejoice, for Death is
vanquished.”

Voices

“ Oh! Hope, thine hand hath led
Man's spirit upwards. Spread
Thy wings about him. Nourish there
The spring of immortality till fear
Depart and tranquil thoughts arise
To calm a transient pain. Draw near, draw near
Loosen his fetters, and unseal his eyes.”

Voice of Nature

“ Oh! thou calm minister of secret thought,
Fountain of living waters in the waste
Of desert hearts, and light of gloomy days!
Thou star of pallid dawn, bright constant moon

Instinct with silver whispers, who doth bend
Attendant to the Earth, hast thou with man
Climbed the steep watches of the lonely hours ?
Is it thy hand outstretched hath led his feet
Thro' sounding shades, and heaven-extending fields
Pasturing the herded stars, and coted worlds ?
Art thou alone with him ? and may none else
Tread those precipitous defiles of thought,
Or in the mazy round of reason check
The spring of infidelity, despair ?
Oh ! lest a disenchantment come again,
And thou be mute,—lest there should breathe a
chill

Of mortal unbelief, or sudden fall
The shadow of decay, a passing blight
To blast endeavour, or to stay the growth,
Ay, for an instant's space of one thing good,
Free, pure, and beautiful amidst us—speak !
Sing thou again until thy words create
The consciousness of endless life in him :
Till souls new-born forth from their wrappings creep,
Even as glittering creatures break from shells
Brown, worn, and worthless, and in summer's prime
Flit lacey-wingd beneath the beechen shade ;
Or as young seeds in magic hours unfold,
Warming with rapture in a quickening spring ;

Even as mine own handiwork doth grow
Ceaselessly striving for an excellence
As yet unknown, of which no prescience be
Save in the inarticulate desire
For fuller life, and deeper joy and promise
Of the red sapling, or the bracken's curl,
Or the sweet rounded lips of flushing buds.
The unseen is around us, and allures.
We strive for that which is not yet. But Faith
Uplifts the labour, and with us is Love,
And those attendant graces which forbear
In utter patience till we consummate
The destined end. But in the far-off Earth
Is there no minister with thee to cheer
The hour of travail? Where the wingéd thoughts
Which speed from Wisdom's height to lend their
aid?
Where is the voice of Virtue? Where is Love?
And Faith and Patience in the weary world?"

Voice of Hope

" Dreaming of a far delight
I wandered lonely thro' the night,
Solitary-hearted, singing
Of the gifts the morning bringing

Scatters from her happy hand—
Buds by gentle breezes fanned
Blooming with the dawning light,
Hearts of flowers, which unfolding
Fill with bliss the eyes beholding,
Sunshine floating o'er the land
Into dark and dismal places,
Haunts corrupt and melancholy,
Where the proud the poor distresses,
And Sin lives amidst unholy
Sights, where tears on children's faces
Seem as heavy rain that presses
Buds to earth. I sang of Heaven
Unobscured by clouds, and smiling
On each contrite heart, beguiling
Sorrow from the broken spirit :
And of chaplets which are woven
For the souls by suff'ring proven :
Of the beauty those inherit
From their patience ; fuller life
Springing from the dust of death ;
Singing of that rest from strife
In a sure tranquillity—
Of awakened melody
Sounding in each Zephyr's breath,
Clear and ever clearer growing

Till a thrilling Earth upraises
Her full chant of happy praises ;
And all human spirits, knowing
Freedom from a mortal sadness,
Rest immortal in their gladness."

Voices (singing)

" Spirit of Earth, we hear thee wake !
The mists, the night have fled away.
For yonder, see the sunbeams break
The fetters of imprisoned day.
Oh ! unrestrained—pure as they,
From thy young soul the bondage shake—
And as the bride of Love, awake ! "

Voice of Hope

" I heard the voice of one who cried
Upon the barren mountain side,
Sad Echo mourning on the mountain,
Memory seated by the fountain
Of heavy tears, to pluck the leaves
Of laurel from the wreath she weaves,
All her losses unrequited.
E'er the morn her torch had lighted
Thus they sang their low refrain,
And I heard their hearts complain,

Sighing in the shadows grey—
' Never, never breaks the day.
Love and Faith have passed away.' "

Voices

" As the years which are dead
In the voiceless void
They have passed, they have fled ! "

Voices

" From the earth's discord,
From envy where quiet may never be,
From wars, oppression, and cruelty,
From unrepentance, and lust, and pride,
The eyes that shunned, and the tongues that lied."

Voices

" Who shall pursue them ?
Who may renew them
In the world where the spirits of men abide ? "

Voice

" Never, ah ! never !
" Love hath no place in the heart unshriven."

Voices

“ And man—shall he pass, shall he die for ever,
Unwept, unremembered, and unforgiven ? ”

Voice

“ He shall be
As a flower that hath died,
As a leaf which is tossed
To its wintry grave, as a thought
That is lost ! ”

Voices

“ Oh ! sadness, ruin, and misery !
Oh ! Life which returns to the dust in death,
Unsatisfied form and empty breath—
Loveliness imaged to come to naught ! ! ”

Voice of Hope

“ Peace to your sorrow. Bend the listening ear
To that low voice which wakes the stillness, straying
Thro’ silences inviolate. I hear
The far-off fall of a repentant tear,
A delicate entreaty, spirits praying :
And lo ! the whisper, as a star from Heaven
Dropping thro’ space, which breathes the word
‘ forgiven.’ ”

Voice of Nature

“Forth from your heaven, ye wingéd brightnesses,
And ministers of life ! Nor falls a tear,
Nor breathes desire for good, nor cometh longing
In human hearts for freedom, but ye spring
From the far nichéd splendours, where ye sit
In visions of pure peace with folded wing.
Oh ! in my breast which mothers all things seen
Cometh new joy : and o’er my sight the veil
Of gladdening tears. For not alone I toil,
When sowing hath its reaping. Labour wins
To its good end. Delay not now the hour :
Nor let a heavy moment beat its space.
Outstretch your nervy pinions to the winds,
And from the harbouring heavens take your way
On your blest mission to a world forgiven.”

With tremulous delight the skies are cloven
As by a sword blade. Swift from pole to pole
The azure curtain suddenly unwoven
Is rent asunder. As its lengths unroll
A myriad shining forms, a myriad faces
Break on the dazzled sight, a myriad wings
Expanding with strong beats fill the high places,
Unnumbered as the summer flowers. Bright things,

Lustrous in purity exceeding snow
On distant summits, take their way, and hover
Like mists above a lake ; till, bending low,
Straight as the thoughts of an adoring lover
Turn ever to the mistress of his heart—
So came they at her call : and in the train
Of one excelling bore their happy part.
Thus gathered they to meet the Earth again :
Whilst Love triumphant moved adown the skies
Upon a sun-enwoven path, his feet
Lit all about with radiance and his eyes,
In whose unshadowed depths fresh splendours
meet,
Seeking the one whose love shall make his heaven
complete.”

Voices (singing)

“ Spirit of Earth ! man’s soul is free,
Since in his undefiléd mind
Unchanging Beauty yet shall be.
Nor sin nor Death may portion find
Where all sweet thoughts and actions bind
His heart to immortality.
Spirit of Earth ! Love waits for thee.

“ Deep dawning in thine upraised eyes
Young raptures with the sorrows play :
Till, kindled to a glad surprise,
The passing sadness melts away ;
And thou look’st upwards to the day,
And to the splendid morning skies.
Oh ! as the bride of Love arise.”

Then from the wooded shades a figure slipt
Into full form and semblance, and approached
In frail diaphanous apparel wrapt,
Scarce veiled by floating folds, and timid reached
Her outstretched hands to heaven. As a flower
Weighed by a dew-drop in its lustrous cup
Half hangs the burdened head, beneath desire
And expectation hardly glancing up
She came, she tarried, with slow feet advanced,
As one who lingers yet to speed is fain.
The very silence seems to brood entranced ;
The winds forbear their breath, the birds restrain
Their piping cries ; the incensed blooms with-
hold
A space their votive offerings : and the crowd
Of bending shapes is stilled. Nor wings unfold,
Nor voice anticipates. Each head is bowed,

And eyes await the issue. Dost thou stay,
Blest spirit, for a doubt? Doubt hath no place.
For Time? He is not. He hath passed away.
Love knows no shackling fear, nor Time, nor space.
He waits a ransomed Earth. Lift up again thy face.

Voices (singing)

“ Hearken oh ! hearken
To the voices which call us,
Leading away from the dreams which appal us ;
Dreams which are spun in the shades of the night,
All the vain fancies which fret us, and darken
The eyes of the morning, and vex and affright—

Hasten away—
It is light, it is light,
It is day ! ”

Voices (singing)

THE EPITHALAMIUM

“ Awake ! ye little buds of hill and dale,
Ye thousand constant ministers of grace,
Bright darlings of the wood and of the vale,
And ye, who by the riverside have place
Of cool refreshment on green mossy bed,
With silver dews by wingéd zephyrs fed,

Shake sloth away, and raise th' recumbent head
Oppressed by sleep. Show each your mantling
face

Blushing to greet a nuptial morn, and hail
This new-born hour when earth and heavenly Love
are wed.

“ Thro' the long night a single bird hath sung
Sweet invitation to the wind and water,
The only sleepless thing which moved among
Still flowers and drowsy nodding leaves. The
daughter

Of the lorn violet her eyes hath sealed
In slumber, and the daisies in the field
Dream quietly ; nor lily peeps to yield
Fresh fragrance to the breeze. Hushed is the
laughter

Of hyacinths, whose silver cups are strung
To chime in harmony when marriage bells are
pealed ;

“ For see them doting on their slender stem,
As if they hung suspended by a breath
Awaiting some faint call to waken them !
Is there no murmur of a rousing earth ?

No sound of footfall passing in the brake ?
Nor in the valley Echo crying ' Shake,
Shake yet again your happy bells, and make
The woodland shades repeat your noisy mirth.
Up ! for the very silences condemn
Your slumber. Rouse you with the radiant morn.
Awake ! '

" The long grey shadows on the lake are dying.
The river doffs the midnight mists. The sea
Seems in a trance to hear the distant crying ;
And to its twilight depths, where quietly
Wave fronded forests, and the coral beads
Lie loose, and old Poseidon's tethered steeds
Chafe at the halter, and the mermaid feeds
From red-lipped shells, and many wonders be
Of hornéd conches in the caverns lying,
Belled animals, and flowers, and purple ocean weeds ;

" To these far tracts and oozy dwelling places
The voice of singing cometh. From the deep
The daughters of the sea uplift their faces ;
And down the climbing billows' watery steep
Lead the gay dance. Whilst on the silver sands
Aurora, rosy-fingered, laughing stands

Out-stretching to the winds her maiden hands,
Till sullenly before her gloom and sleep
Steal to the westward ; and the morning hazes
Lift from the ocean's waste, from earth's encircling
lands :

“ Till one late star, which hangs above the
trees

So low I well believe that it is shaken
By every tremble of the passing breeze,
Now, daily by some earthborn lover taken,
Sinks to the circle of his arms to live
By those dear kisses which they take and give.
Long since towards the tryst her footsteps
move.

Yet early wanderers, who watch and waken,
May find the twain enwrapt in slumbrous ease
Twined in a long caress until the summer's eve,

“ And startle her from out his arms to fly
Down the pellucid heaven ; when, as she passes,
Spent kisses cast away thro' urgency
Shall glimmer as pale lights upon the grasses :
And who hath mind may gather them to be
A bridal coronet whose witchery

Outshines the lights which play on land and sea,
Or those faint wandering sparks of the morasses
And sedgy banks, or gleams where glow-worms
lie

Trimming their little lamps to burn unceasingly.

“ Come, spirits of low meadows by the river,
Where, oft as eve declines, our eyes have seen
Frail shapes as airy as the fancy hover
To spread a misty carpet on the green—
Fashion again your magic web till, spinning
The gossamer in silken threads, entwining
Pale moonbeams into silver knots and shining,
You make a lustrous robe, whose dazzling
sheen

Shall be the wonder of each artless weaver :
And take from out your hidden hoards for inner
lining

“ Petals of flowers whose faint cheeks at dusk
Are paler than the driven foam of breakers,
With purple pansies, and embrownéd musk
Splashed by a tricky sprite, who over acres
Of dim unearthly pasture flits to tint
Young opening buds with dappled ornament.

And you, whose fairy labours can invent
Soft downy beds for sleeping seeds, the makers
Of the smooth silken lining in each husk,
Floss of the pappus crown, pillows for fruits unrent :

“ You too who from the honied cups can rifle
Such stores of scent, such odorous sweet treasure
Garnered in summer moments, breaths to stifle
The swooning senses in narcotic pleasure,
And dull the brain with fragrance : you whose
fingers
Capture the heavy-laden bee, which lingers
On the musk rose, to speed again as bringers
Of flaky gold-dust poured in stintless measure :
And you who in the lily’s chalice trifle
With the bell’s yellow clapper, gay enchanting
ringers,

“ Come, one and all—nor longer yet delay,
Teasing the morning shades with idle chatter.
This is Love’s hour, and this Love’s holiday,
And this the place where busy hands shall scatter
Their burden of bright buds, pink, white, and
gold,
Deep-coloured blossoms, or whose leaves enfold

Pale bosoms flushed at nipple points, to hold
Just that one drop of dew which, at the latter
Still hour of dawn, fell into them, and lay
A sphere of shining light, wrapt from the outer
cold,

“ And, as a dream, shall pass away at noon,
To melt into the distant heaven and be
A wingéd hope to some lost star, yet soon
Bends to the earth again, and lovingly
Cools the faint forehead of a languid flower.
Slow cometh yet the noontide’s burdened hour,
And slow the evening with her gladdening dower
Of silence, shade, wan star, and silver moon.
For us the happy day is young and we
Gather the firstborn fruits to bring into Love’s
bower.

“ For here is Spring with her attendant graces,
The early Dryads of the woods, who come
Forth from the living green of forest places,
Some with the whitening blackthorn boughs,
and some
Bearing the palm whose pearly tufts are netted
In yellow meshes, crocuses o’er fretted

With purple lines and mosses violeted
Pluckt by the armful from that dewy home,
Where shy anemones turn down their faces
To chide the ardent stream whose spray their
blossoms wetted.

“ And Summer rose-deckt, Autumn in the splendour
Of the rich samite garments that enfold her
O’erspread with russet leaves, Winter grown tender
And bearing one glad thrush upon his shoulder
Piping its three-fold melody to waken
These ancient groves the shepherds have forsaken,
Since the last summer’s swallow flight hath taken :
And calls them from the coted flocks to render
In lieu of later ditties learnt those older
And unforgotten words which former tongues had spoken

“ Whilst yet the pastures slumbered in the ease
Of sunnier days and moments undistressed.
Peace calls again, and bosoms know release
From jading care and sorrow. Welcome ! rest ;

And ye, ye happy intimates of Earth,
Gay winds and wanton waters at whose birth
The morning smiled, whose tumult turns to
mirth

And harmony ; and ye, ye creatures blest
With freedom, and the plenteous earth's in-
crease—

Rejoice ye, and aspire throughout the wide world's
girth.

“Ye hoary mountain summits, shake with
singing,

Ye chasmed crags where footfall never fell,
Ye rolling plains, whose forest trees are flinging
Abroad their palmy shade,—where leopards
dwell,

And in the noontide hush the woods are still,
Their crimson blooms asleep upon the hill,
And silence broods, save where the wandering
rill

Slips to the river. Lo ! your birds are
winging

Their flight to us. In every nook and dell
The trembling flowers look up, and incensed dews
distil ;

“ And the rapt air is burdened with the tread
Of happy shades who knew the destined day,
Marking the slow Time’s course. The glorious
dead

Again are with us, as in mortal clay
They smiled on wasted hope, and pain, and
fear.

The true, the brave, the beautiful are here,
Whose lives are as spring blossoms white and
fair

Rising from out the chilly winter’s bed :
Or, as in sullen night, one earliest ray
Awakes the kindling Dawn to be Light’s minister.

“ And thou, sad Niobe, weep not, tho’ one
Hath felt Time’s change, thy noblest and thy
best :

Tho’ by the fountain of deep tears alone
Thou sittest. He is folded to his rest
Yet sleeps not ever. For a sudden Death
Stole but a moment that enduring breath.
He is but as a child who slumbereth
Wearied by all the work which hath beer
done,

His tired head reposing on the breast
Of kindly Earth, her arms around him, and beneath

“ He cometh with the dewy day. His feet
Trample the splendour of the morning skies.
The breezes are his voice, and midst the sweet
Young flowers he moves to hear their melodies,
And calleth with each singing bird to thee
To cease from sorrow. Hence ! dark melan-
choly.

Oh ! let the bridal robe of laughter be
Thy shining vesture. From the tomb arise
With blossoming staff, and haste where lovers
meet,
And sunless eyes are lit, and captive limbs are
free.

“ Peace to thy sorrow. Peace to minds dis-
traught !
Eternity doth wrap us to His breast
Who is the fount of every lovely thought
And deed. He hath not willingly distressed
The minds of men : but earthward bends to see
Our souls outsoar this brief humanity
And the fair knowledge dawn, that all things be
But images of Truth His love hath wrought,
And quickened by a breath. In Him we rest,
And find in Love the spring of immortality.”

.

Fled from my waking soul their song. Abroad
The newborn day flingeth its kindling beams.
The shepherd foots the narrow upland road
To where his flock, in fragrant pasture, dreams
The night away. Hark! how the chanticleer
From the high barn summons the dawn, and sends
His thrilling voice athwart the shadows drear.
For yonder, morning's golden spearhead rends
The eastern darkness. Welcome, happy day!
Rouse me from easeful slumber. I would rise
To pass where mists as little children play
About the hills' mild knees, and joyous skies.
There would I climb the heights, and shake the
dew

From my loath feet which tarry by the heaps
Of wild rose and of eglantine to view
The winding path I traversed,—where it creeps
By bosky knoll, and flower-embroidered glade
Down to the valley's gracious gloom beneath—
To Ockley's green,—to Oakwood's leafy shade,
Sweet woods of Ashdown, and the vale of Leith—
Pleasant thy smile to me, thou great and gracious
Earth.

Sing! happy lark, who from the dewy field
Springest to freedom, and to wastes of blue.

To thee, as to my heart, hath been revealed
The glory of a world which shall renew

The morn of life again. Lo ! sweet and clear,
Far off, aloft, thy straining passion sings
Exultant greeting. Thou gay harbinger
Of sunlit hours, and hopes, and glorious things
Born from a warm earth's beauty ! I shall mount,
Soaring as thou, for ever high and higher
To feed my soul at the unchanging fount
Of a pure rapture. Dost thou quench desire
Upon the breast of some eternal source
Of melody ? Sing on. I would my tongue
Might tune its accents to the self-same course
Of matchless music : that my wings outflung
Beat on the liquid air, and felt the breath
Of each soft breeze approach, to bear me on
For ever upward ; till the earth beneath
Spin from my sight, until I rest upon
That bosom of delight where thou, unseen, hast gone.

Peace ! thou unquiet spirit of distrust ;
Untranquil phantom of despair, away !
With the new morn be every murmur hushed,
And every shadow fled. The light winds play
About the rosy hours. In copse and brake
The birds attune their little throats to pipe

A mattins psalm. And on the bank the snake
Uncoils his length luxuriously : and ripe
Hangs the wild windberry, and ripe the load
Of golden pollen, where yon heavy bee
Rifles the crimson clover by the road,
And drains each honeyed cup delightedly.
Thou charmed robber with the loaded thigh,
Thou thief of summer hours,—thy toil is sweet.
Thou singest at thy work. The sun is high,
And half-blown buds, which peeped the day to greet
Spread wide th' expanding bell, and tempt thee
far

Adown thy scented journey. Dost thou find
Thy mistress in the heather bloom, some star
Of the heart's fancy which fond thought resigned
As all too blest for thee ? Dream on. The earth
is kind.

Oh ! spirit of delight ! thy wings are spread
About these quiet meadows. In the hay
Outstretched the weary labourer rests his head,
And drowzes through the noontide heat. Away
Close to yon rising stack the dray-horse stands,
Beside th' unloaded wain and waits the call
To work once more. Oh ! calm of summer lands !
And summer hours ! The gilded moments fall

Into the lap of evening, and the light
Fresh breeze reawakes, and workers bare the brow,
Lean on the supple fork to watch the night
Steal shyly from her ambushed corner. Now
Dies on the ear the hum of reaping. Chill
The first dew falls. The heavy-laden bee
Long since has homeward flown, and from the hill
Day's golden splendour fades reluctantly.
I am alone with silence. One by one
The flocks of wandering stars steal into sight ;
And, as a shepherdess, the crescent moon
Enters the stilly pastures of the night ;
And in the opal sky hangs out her crystal light.


Peace, heart of mine ! For ever let me know
Thine own serenity, eternal Love.
Grant me but length of days, so I may grow
In Thine own likeness : that where'er I move,
Beholding Thee as beckoning from afar—
Like some lost mariner across the wild
Of waters hath his vision of a star
To point the harbour—so for me, Thy child,
Hang in the heavens a guiding light, till I
Have passed beyond this rocky coast of life,
And sailed into a calm eternity.
Nor grant me here release from mortal strife,

Nor more than earth can give. Content I see
In every human face, in nature's art,
A purpose moulding my high destiny.
Teach me but as a man to play my part.
It is enough. Then oh ! sweet sounds of earth,
Birds, blossoms, sunshine, summer winds and rain—
All that I love—this knowledge comes to birth,
That Truth outlives the tumult and the pain—
I shall awake from death, and see the flowers again.



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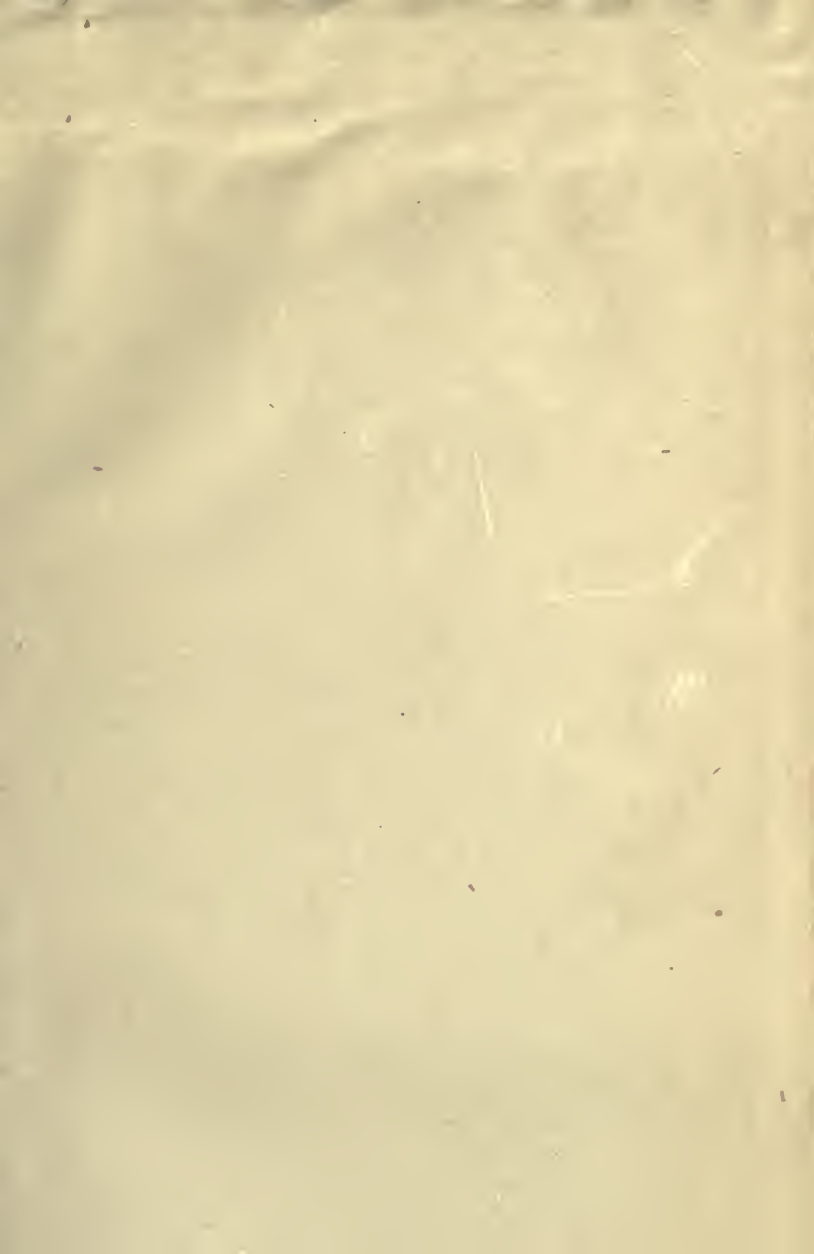
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